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Missouri Headwaters State Park

Interpretive Concept Plan

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Produced for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
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I. PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Missouri Headwaters State Park, a 520-acre recreation area at the confluence of the three rivers that form the Missouri, sits on one of the most significant spots in the Western hemisphere.

For 13,000 years, the Missouri Headwaters has told one long, unending story of confluence and influence. Here the Madison, Jefferson and Gallatin Rivers converge to form the Missouri River, one of the longest and most important waterways on the North American continent.

Geologically, the convergence of three major river systems creates a fertile joining of ecosystems and resources. It forms a powerful intersection of transportation corridors for wildlife, birds and waterfowl, and all kinds of life. Historically, this bottomland was rich with wildlife and natural resources, attracting people of many nations and tribes to hunt and camp here over thousands of years.

A place this fertile and important draws people of many cultures, for myriad reasons. The cultural interactions at the Headwaters area — whether full of joy or wonder or satisfaction or great conflict — have woven a many-colored tapestry of stories and meanings into the human experience of this landscape.

The Missouri River confluence area is significant to every culture that has lived in or passed through here. Its rivers flow out of the Yellowstone Caldera, a place where some cultures believe human history began. For the nascent United States, the Headwaters represented a dream of control over its own destiny. For explorers and settlers who came within the last two hundred years, it is a place to build a future. For many who visit today, the Headwaters is a place to get back in touch with nature, with oneself, and with a sense of timelessness in the midst of Time's unceasing flow. Geologically, historically and spiritually, it is a Genesis Site.

Historical significance

Many of the indigenous nations of the Northern Plains shared and competed over the use of the Headwaters region and its abundant resources. Flathead, Shoshone, Bannock, Apsaálooka (Crow) and Blackfeet tribes lived in the area at various times over hundreds (perhaps thousands) of years. Though there is no evidence that any one nation controlled the Headwaters area for long, it is clear that this place was significant to many tribes and nations. Storytellers portray the Headwaters as a place too important to all cultures for one group to control it for too long.

Between the 1540s and the early 1800s, European nations competed fiercely for increasing control over the Missouri River corridor, which many considered to be the key to wealth for their expanding economies. Lewis and Clark were the most celebrated, but by no means the first Euro-Americans to set eyes on the Headwaters area. To them the primary significance of the Headwaters was their realization that the Missouri would not lead them to the hoped-for Northwest Passage to the Pacific.

Colter and Druillard, members of the Lewis & Clark expedition, returned to the Three Forks region to trap and explore, and their activities here contribute both to the historical significance, and to the legends of this place. In 1808 the Blackfeet waged a great battle against the Crows and the Flathead here, and gained control over the Headwaters area. In 1810, 32 French and American trappers, assisted by a military detachment, erected a stockade at Three Forks to protect themselves from the Blackfeet. The post was abandoned a few years later, unable to stand up against attacks by the Blackfeet and by grizzly bears. In 1822 a group of traders who ventured into Headwaters country reported that the region was trapped out and virtually abandoned by humans.

The town of Gallatin City budded in 1862 as the center for steamboat traffic on the upper Missouri, and died about 20 years later. Three Forks, Logan and Trident grew up as the railroad lines arrived, and since then the Headwaters area has been used and treasured for its rich natural resources, for its strategic location, and for its unadulterated beauty.

From the Indigenous people of pre-history to today's researchers and recreationers, the Headwaters area has drawn a near-constant stream of people seeking food, communion, adventure, trade and opportunity.

The Headwaters becomes a park

In the 1920s, local citizens became interested in preserving the area as a park, and formed a group called The Founder's Club. In the 1940s, Clark M. Maudlin bought about 15 acres around the Headwaters site, which he and his wife later deeded to the State of Montana to be developed as a park.

In 1965, the Montana Dept. of Fish and Game (now Fish, Wildlife & Parks) became responsible for the state parks. At that time the Headwaters Park was greatly enlarged, and in 1976 it was named a Bicentennial Site.

Today, this lush stretch of land now protected as Missouri Headwaters State Park holds a special place in the hearts of visitors and locals, drawing thousands of visitors each summer. Within a few years, thousands of additional visitors are expected to wash

through Montana seeking an experience of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and Headwaters will be a prime destination for those avid history buffs.

Missouri Headwaters is more than a park, more than a recreation area or a focal point for Lewis & Clark enthusiasts. It is a place where many realms of meaning come together, where many historical traditions converge, where the landscape itself tells a story. It has been said that if you could balance the North American continent on a single point, that point would be the Headwaters of the Missouri River.

As a place of importance to many people and cultures, as a sanctuary for recreation and re-generation for individuals and families, as a focal point of the continent itself, the Missouri Headwaters area remains a Genesis Site.

II. EXISTING INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES

As lovely as Missouri Headwaters State Park is, and with all its recreational activities available, the park still offers many visitors, especially first-time visitors, an unsatisfying park experience.

Physical layout: With a secondary state road as its main artery, the park suffers from traffic conflicts between park users and commercial truck traffic on the road. Loaded semi-trucks coming from the cement plant 8 miles down the road take the park road at the speed limit (70 mph), creating traffic conflicts with slow-moving recreational vehicles making wide, leisurely exits and entrances onto the road from the various recreational spots along the park's backbone.

Also, because the park road is also the primary access to Trident and the cement plant, the park orientation area is set off to the side of the road. This weathered, old, uninviting and ineffective entrance area leaves visitors wondering what to do, where to go, and whether to pay a fee or not. Many visitors become discouraged over the outdated shabby welcome information, which should help guide them into the park but instead leaves them perplexed and under-enthusiastic. After viewing antiquated displays, most visitors just turn around and leave.

This sign at the entrance greets visitors

Interpretive problems to be solved: Right from the very entrance, park managers report that visitors are usually confused as to the location of the park facilities, its general service and what and where the historical points of interest lie.

At the parking area of the Missouri River confluence, the focal point of the park, the extent of the interpretation is one small routed wood sign stating that Madison and Jefferson Rivers join to form the Missouri River. Another small sign beside the river briefly describes the Missouri River drainage and the trapping era.

The Fort Rock walking trail, which provides a spectacular 360-degree vista of the area, contains a few landmark identification signs, but there is no supportive interpretation to help people understand where they are, what they are looking at, or the deeper significance of the place.

Text panels at the picnic and interpretive plaza provide general information without any supportive storyline. The panels are limited in their interpretive message. There is one general panel about Native American culture, but it lacks life and specificity — it doesn't even name the nations who lived here. Other information is disjointed, though it holds seeds of important stories to be told here.

Throughout the park, the present interpretation is disjointed, fragmented, Eurocentric and outdated. The interpretation tells many of the stories of the Headwaters area, but doesn't draw these disparate stories together in any cohesive theme or with any particular purpose. Unless they bring a lot of knowledge with them, or come simply for recreation and not to learn anything, visitors are left to wonder what this park is all about.

Improvements strongly recommended

In 1999, interpreters with the National Park Service, sponsored by the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commission, conducted a statewide survey of interpretation related to the Lewis & Clark expedition, including recommendations for improvement in anticipation of the Bicentennial celebration of the expedition in 2005. Included in their assessment were the following comments:

> *The overall look at the entrance to the park is a bit piecemeal. The restrooms are weathered and old looking. The information board is weathered and damaged. There are many different ages and types of signage — not a good introduction to a good facility. The restroom figures prominently against the view of the Gallatin Hotel from the entrance parking area. Feature A (Boat ramp parking area) has too many styles of signs and no cohesiveness. The signs should be together with landscaping. The plywood "Louisiana Purchase" sign is weathered and is peeling paint.*

Recommendation: The entrance should reflect the quality of the rest of the site. The signs should be updated and consistent. This is a good place to introduce the Lewis and Clark journey with an overview. [At the boat ramp] Lewis and Clark could be added. This is an excellent opportunity show where Lewis & Clark floated the river. "You can practically reach out and touch where Lewis and Clark were." This is one of the few places where you can get really close to where Lewis & Clark were. Fit the theme of floating the Missouri Headwaters — then and now. Good spot to effectively use sculptural elements.

[Interpretive plaza] has too much interpretation. All the dedication markers detract from the message of the interpretation. The Centennial Acres dedication sign is outdated. The plywood signs are badly weathered and need to be replaced. Great opportunity for some three-dimensional interpretation. Exciting interpretive shelter design. Peak identifiers are good but showing signs of vandalism.

Clearly, some of these problems can be addressed simply by updating the interpretive signs. Some, however, require a little more thought, planning and decision-making by MFWP and also by the local community and those with Tribal interests.

Issues and Influences

The managers of Headwaters State Park face several major issues:

1. **The upcoming Lewis & Clark Bicentennial** will attract a great number of tourists to the park as early as 2002, through 2006, and probably for several years after. Park managers will be challenged to accommodate what could be large crowds of people — perhaps even enough to threaten the "wild, natural" image of the park — with minimal facilities, parking, and staff.

2. **Road use conflicts** between cement truck drivers and recreational visitors already cause a problem at the park. MFWP already is pursuing some solutions, including reducing the speed limit; improving turn-out lanes; and attempting as much as possible to restrict left-hand turns within the park. This Interpretive Plan suggests a one-way plan that directs traffic all the way through the park, to a turn-around, and back again with no left-hand turns. But it must be remembered that the road that runs through the park is a state road, with unrestricted access, and it will take time and cooperation of several different agencies to make these changes.

3. **Headwaters State Park is a Primitive Park**, which means that under Montana state law, MFWP is prohibited from building, paving, or improving the park's facilities, except where required by safety and sanitation. The Primitive Parks designation both protects the park from development of any kind, and prevents the kind of improvements that would protect the natural landscape during years of extra-heavy visitation. The Primitive Park status prevents paving new parking areas or expanding the existing ones; prevents the building of a new tool shed or a staff facility (though a trailer could be pulled onto the site for seasonal use); prevents redesigning the park entrance in any structural or significant way; and also prevents widening the road, installing new interpretive signs where none exist, creating a new interpretive area for live programs, or other such developments that could aid in crowd control, enhance programming and help protect the unpaved areas from trampling by large numbers of people. While many of the suggestions mentioned in the Interpretive Plan Workbook would require lifting the Primitive Parks designation at Headwaters, public opinions expressed during the preparation of the Interpretive Plan strongly favored protecting what is left of the wildness and undeveloped nature of Headwaters State Park.

4. A small staff and a $6,000 annual operating budget currently limits the level and types of services that Headwaters State Park can offer the public. The Park staff must rely heavily on volunteers, and will have to partner up with other agencies and organizations to conduct a full complement of interpretive programs.

III. THEME: CONFLUENCE

Subthemes: Origins — Movements — Interactions

Headwaters State Park, both geographically and symbolically, embodies the theme of Confluence. Here we experience the convergence of rivers, of species, of cultures, of ideas. The convergences that have happened and continue to happen here shape the world we live in – physically, politically, philosophically.

This world of confluence is seen in three major aspects: Origins, Movements, and Interactions. Headwaters is a place of origin of the Missouri River, of communities and cultures, and of stories. History (and pre-history) tells its story through the movement of people, of resources, and of time. And all major events that happen here are events of interactions, whether between people and the animals or environment, or between different people. Origins, Movements and Interactions are three sub-themes for

interpretation at Headwaters, and will be expressed in graphics, in design of signs or facilities, in interpretive text or in supporting materials.

Within these three themes, a cornucopia of stories can be told at each identified site or area in the park. This section begins with a discussion of each of the three major themes, followed by the interpretive philosophy as developed by participants who contributed to this Interpretive Plan. Section VII, Interpretive Program Description, contains lists of stories to be told at each area of the park, along with suggested interpretive methods and notes and comments from participants who helped in the preparation of this Plan.

1. ORIGINS (land and people):
Headwaters is a "Genesis site"

- Natural history, landscape, climate, biota
- Stories of how the land came to be
- People origins, oral traditions

As a Genesis site, the Headwaters of the Missouri River System is a very powerful place, where natural, biological, cultural and political forces collide. Every group of people that has come here — the early Indigenous people, the Bannocks, the Shoshone, the Apsaalooka, the Flatheads, the Blackfeet, the Spaniards and French, the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the trappers and mountain men, the 19th Century settlers, the residents of Three Forks, and visitors today — all find the Headwaters area a very powerful place.

The Missouri River, including the headwaters of its three origin rivers, is one of the two major waterways of the North American continent that define life and humanity. Like the N. Saskatchewan River in Canada, the Missouri River system is the source of life for humans, wildlife, plants and grasses, and for every form of life between the Yellowstone Caldera and the Gulf of Mexico. It feeds the entire continent with water, nutrients, and energy. It serves as a transportation corridor for culture, trade, people and ideas; and for birds, animals, biota, nutrients, and biological interactions — all the forces that shape a land and life in it.

The Missouri is a world-class river, important in a global context, one of the rivers that operates as a main artery of the globe, delivering water, nutrients, natural resources — life — downstream and receiving people, ideas, changes, and consequences.

2. MOVEMENTS (wildlife and people) :

Headwaters has always been opulent wildlife habitat, rich with natural resources.

- Railroad, highway, river, Old North Trail, Bannock Trail
    - Time and the river
        - People in motion through the area
- Reasons for movement
    - Land is always neutral, always contested

Before settlements, fences and highways, the Headwaters area was resplendent with game: bison, elk, deer, coyote, moose, geese and ducks. Lush river grasses and native plants abounded, and the river-fed nutrients in the soil and grasslands nourished a multitude of species. This area was so rich in resources that no single group or tribe could control it; many groups (willingly or not) shared use of the resources here, from the chert mine near the river to the bison kill site in the distance (Madison Buffalo Jump).

As the goal of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, the Headwaters of the Missouri represented conquest of the New World. From here, Jefferson hoped they would find the Northwest Passage, allowing direct transportation from coast to coast. The Missouri River traced the westward edge of the Louisiana Purchase, a concept that brought European ethics and Indigenous cultures into direct and violent confrontation. In this sense, the river itself is a metaphor for the flow of time, and the convergence of forces that shape history. The river is an archetypal fabric that conveys ideas downstream to a multitude of cultural, political, and personal tributaries, rivulets and bays.

For 13,000 years, natural forces, wildlife, groups of people and a rich cacophony of differing ideas have converged at the Headwaters area. It is a place of conflict and reunion, of richness and loss, of great trauma and sublime peace, a place that feeds the entire continent with nutrients and life; a place that has influenced life on this continent since human history began.

Marmots sunning on the rocks; Canada geese along the river's edge across from the boat ramp, and owls in the cliffs above; rabbits on the Fort Rock trail; a porcupine napping in the afternoon; deer in the cottonwoods; a buffalo jump in the distant hills.

After their initial explorations, Potts, Drouillard and Colter all returned to the West; all returned to this place. Their stories are among the few that color our understanding of the land.

3. INTERACTIONS (people with the land; people with people):
Headwaters abounds with human stories.

- The place provided a living to the people
    - The place was always contested; conflicts between people
        - Opulent wildlife and resources here

The fecundity of the Headwaters has drawn people here from across the Northern Plains to hunt, trap, trade, fight, celebrate, camp and enjoy Nature's bounty. Whenever people come together there is conflict and change, shock and celebration. Headwaters simmers with the stories of people who have lived and worked here, traveled through here, and taken with them a multitude of experiences.

Headwaters is an opulent landscape, brimming with life, where people have made their living and interacted with the land in ways that have reverberated down through the centuries. Mastadons in the area 11,000 years ago; pre-historic peoples mining chert; abundant natural resources including plants, fishes, birds, insects, fur-bearing animals, the all-important beaver, and other aspects of life. This was where people came to steal the Hidatsa's high-quality horses. Today there is a cement plant, based right where Lewis marked that there would be good minerals for making concrete.

Such an abundant place becomes a focal point for change, on both a personal and a continental level. Here, Sacagewea was kidnapped from her Shoshone people and taken as a slave, then engaged as a companion to Charbonneau, and through him became involved in the Lewis and Clark party as an interpreter, guide, and symbol to other tribes of the party's peaceful intentions. When the Corps of Discovery arrived at the Headwaters in July 1805, she took over leadership of the expedition, helping make critical decisions and leading the Corp to the Shoshone, who would help them over the mountains.

The Lewis & Clark party's separation here during their return trip in 1806, the infamous "Colter's Run" incident, the competition between Spanish, French and other economic interests for control of the Headwaters area, the arrival of settlers, the inception of Gallatin City. This is the place of interactions between Drouillard and the Blackfeet; between Fort Three Forks and the Blackfeet; between people who would use the land differently (grazing vs. agriculture). All of these histories boil down to stories of individuals' experiences, some very personal and some of gigantic national import, all of them a part of the overarching theme of interactions between people, and between people and the land.

"Headwaters is a place of consequences. What begins here ends in the Gulf of Mexico. What begins here as a subtle place in the landscape ends up making a huge contribution (dams, electricity, transportation, nutrients, etc.) to the global economy and to the human experience."
— Nicholas Vrooman

How to tell the stories

Interpretive philosophy:

First and foremost, we who manage and use the park today are creating a legacy for future generations. Preserving and protecting the park and its resources must be the highest priority. The second priority is to educate and engage all visitors, local and tourist alike, about the significance and value of Headwaters State Park, and to pass on this great treasure to those who will visit and manage the park in the future. The legacy we want to leave is one of stories and experiences, not of parking lots and latrines. Our third priority is to help provide all visitors with a high-quality park experience, i.e., preserving the natural setting, providing intriguing and effective interpretation, and letting them know what they can and can't do here, and where to go in the area for other services.

Some comments and suggestions from the Focus Group:

> "Headwaters State Park actually is two parks: A) a conceptual park landscaped by stories, ideas, images, knowledge, and B) the real, physical park. B is a real place, but to get there, you have to go through A, through the stories, interpretation."

> "Even though the park is primitive, you have to treat it as though it were a garden, a garden of stories."

> Interpretive signs should intrigue visitors to learn more. But *people*, telling stories, doing re-enactments, giving fireside talks or guided tours, should be the primary vehicle for interpretation at this park.

IV. GOALS

The primary goal of interpretation at MHSP is to provide a cohesive, informative, intriguing story of the area in a combination of methods that enhances visitor experiences and minimizes impact on the landscape.

Residents of the area and park users have expressed a strong desire to minimize development at MHSP, to keep the landscape as wild and natural as possible, and to refrain from expanding its current footprint of paved road and parking area.

Influencing the way visitors think, feel or act:

Participants in the planning workshops helped identify a series of goal statements about the interpretation at Headwaters State Park. These statements help direct and shape the interpretive content to reflect the interwoven stories of this land and its people.

Goals of MHSP interpretation:

- To interweave the many stories of the Headwaters area in a way that is cohesive, informative, and intriguing;
- To be flexible enough to address short-term (i.e., Lewis & Clark Bicentennial) and long-term needs, while making the least impact on the landscape;
- To provide visitors a wide range of experiences
- To broaden visitors' knowledge and appreciation of the area
- To be flexible to accommodate crowds and also allow solitude.

Interpretation at MHSP should be designed with the following goals in mind:

To help the visitor to better understand:

- the historic importance of the place
- at least a few stories from a variety of nations and perspectives
- the "confluence" theme, and how it relates to MHSP
- the significance of MHSP beyond Lewis & Clark history
- where else to go in the region
- the natural history of the area: wildlife, fish, native plants, climate
- how to use the park (fees, bathrooms, recreation)

To help the visitor to feel or experience:

- a part of history (feel the flow of time, curiosity, excitement)
- a sense of awe; of the unknown; of discovery
- a close relationship with the land; a sense of place
- satisfaction with the park
- connection between time and the river's flow
- a spiritual connection with the land; genesis; gratefulness; peace

To influence the visitor to:

- protect the area; respect it; tread lightly
- have an experience of human history
- get out of the car; hike around; spend time here
- explore the whole area
- educate others about the Headwaters and its stories
- seek more information (at Three Forks, Museum of Rockies, etc.)

V. VISITOR EXPERIENCES

The Headwaters State Park Experience

Confluence. Convergence. Coming together. Three great rivers join to form the mighty Missouri River, the longest river on the North American continent, waterway to the heartland of the world. The three rivers, born in the Yellowstone Caldera, are the very source of life on this continent — the birthplace of a land.

This broad, fertile valley where the Missouri forms is a Genesis site on many levels: geologically, biologically, and as a focal point of many groups of people throughout time. Here the geological formations pour water and nutrients into the soil, and also create natural transportation routes for people and animals. Many nations were drawn to this place over time: Apsaálooka, Bannock, Shoshone, French, Blackfeet, Nez Perce, Spanish, and the United States. It was to this confluence that Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery was directed "to explore the Missouri River, & such principal stream of it, as, by its course and communication with the waters of the Pacific ocean...."

Experience the convergence of place, time and life: geology, history, biology and culture. Immerse yourself in the shape and structure of the land, its mineral formations, its cliffs and clefts, its long undulating dance of shifting continents. Stand at the quiet spot where the colliding forces of Western expansionism, European politics, economic competition for the West, the Indian pogroms, and inter-Tribal conflicts brewed roiling rapids of events that changed this land forever. Hear bird-songs and mosquito drones that have not changed for thousands of years; smell the same scent of grasses, cottonwoods, and the rich bottomland that Sacagewea, or her most distant ancestor, also smelled. Imagine yourself into the flow of cultural history in this place that has drawn people to camp, hunt, fish, struggle, create, build, envision, survive, and pass on their stories for hundreds of generations.

Everything changes; everything remains eternal. You yourself are the river, the convergence of life, of ideas, of visions, of memories. Your family is a convergence of stories, a confluence of differences and individualities drawn together by the forces of nature. The land around you is quiet, modest, yet it is the vein of the continent, the ever-flowing, ever-abundant carrier of life and nutrients to North America.

Spend an afternoon at the very Headwaters of time. This is the Missouri Headwaters experience.

VI. VISITOR PROFILE

According to park managers, MHSP hosts 47,000 visitors per year, 80% of them non-resident tourists. The three largest user groups are: tours, schools and elderhostel.

More people come to the Headwaters for educational purposes (formal, i.e. school or elderhostel, and informal, i.e., history buffs, bird watchers) than for pure recreation.

Of the educational visitors, the primary groups are: birders, Lewis & Clark enthusiasts, the Weekend of Discovery participants, and schools.

The primary activities of recreational visitors are boating, fishing, camping and picnicking.

Below is a comprehensive list of kinds of visitors who come to MHSP, along with a symbol representing what they come here to do:

Who uses Headwaters State Park, and what do they come for?

E=Education, R=Recreation, $=Economics, I=Inspiration

E	School tours (kids through college)
E	Elderhostel
E	Tour groups
E	Museum of the Rockies
E	Other Lewis and Clark aficionados/history buffs
E	Heritage Trail foundation
E	Biological Research (MAPS)
E/R	Campfire talks
E/R	Weekend of Discovery
E/R	Tourists
E/R	Gallatin Valley Historical Society
E/R	Group events w/reservations
E/R	Bird watching
E/R	Boy & Girl Scouts
R	Local families
R	Campers
R	Gun Dog Club
R	Fishermen and Floaters
R	Keggers
R	Private families
R	Picnickers
R	Colter Run & other athletic events
R	Hunters
R/I	Church groups
R/I	Native American families and groups
R/I	Artists
$	Three Forks Chamber of Commerce
$	Cement plant & railroad
$	Montana Power Company

VII. INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The stories and methods of interpretation at Headwaters State Park were compiled through a process that included initial research, canvassing participants at a planning

charette, a workbook distributed to charette participants and other members of the public, and finally a focus group meeting. All along the way, park managers and interpretive specialists at Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks contributed their ideas and knowledge.

The interpretive messages of Headwaters State Park can best be delivered using a host of different methods. In addition to interpretive signs in the places outlined above, it is recommended that the park rely heavily on tour guides, docents and interpretive storytellers, especially for the upcoming seasons in which a large influx of Lewis and Clark enthusiasts are expected to visit the Headwaters.

The comprehensive interpretive package at Headwaters should include:

- Interpretive signage
- Guided tours, fireside programs, storytellers
- Living history programs and re-enactments
- Self-guided brochures and audio tapes
- Headwaters web site
- Monuments and historical markers

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks strives to rise to the occasion of the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial, but also is committed to creating a legacy at MHSP that will enhance visitors' experiences here for years to come. The interpretive programs here will radiate from the primary themes, but will cover a multitude of topics, eras and perspectives, drawing visitors into a variety of different kinds of experiences. And, as in all places natural and wild, the experience of solitude and silence will be respected at least as much as the interpretive programs are promoted.

Fitting the stories to the land

Good interpretation provides important information, reveals stories of the land or people who have been there, and draws visitors to experience a place more deeply. The park's geography is its own kind of narrative. Each distinct place in the park encourages its own stories to be told.

This section takes us through the park by area and associates potential stories to be told with each area. Participants in the planning charette, the workbook and the focus group gave significant thought and input into assigning stories to places, and some of their notes and comments are included.

Park Entrance

At the entrance, signs should welcome visitors to the park, intrigue them with the spirit of the place, and draw them further into the park to walk around, learn and explore. It has been strongly suggested that visitors be instructed to drive through the park making only right-hand turnouts, following the story all the way to the end of the park. There, a turn-around (big enough for large RVs!) perhaps at the boat ramp area, allows drivers to view the actual headwaters from the same direction Lewis and Clark approached it. In this way, much of the story can be introduced before Lewis and Clark appear, better placing them in context with the history of the Headwaters.

Stories at the Entrance	Introduce info & themes	Origins	Movements	Interactions
Introduce Confluence theme	*	*	*	*
Explain the layout of the park, how to use the park, fees	*			
Local fishing/hunting regulations	*			*
Other sites in the area: Three Forks museum, Madison Buffalo Jump, Lewis & Clark Caverns, Museum of the Rockies, etc.				
Gallatin City; the flour mill			*	*
Fort Three Forks				*
Chert mines			*	*
Take a step back in time, visualizing human history, geology, natural history, L&C, w/ a map		*	*	*
"Headwaters Nations" – Many have claimed Headwaters as their own, known & anonymous. Many nations, groups, families, individuals.				
Visitor amenities in Three Forks	*			

Methods of interpretation

At the entrance, a number of interpretive possibilities will be employed to greet visitors, to orient them to the park and its facilities, and to provide information about the park, its interpretive themes, and where else to go in the region. Here are some specific suggestions for the entrance area:

Signage: Effective, clear, evocative signage is critical at the entrance, where people will either be drawn further into the park, or will turn around. Signage must establish a sense of arrival, a sense of place and must, by design, clearly delineate where people should park and where they should go. A map of the park and surrounding area will also be included.

A covered kiosk could hold brochures, the MHSP newspaper, and information brochures from the Three Forks community (museum, lodging, etc.)

Self-guided tour: The *Headwaters Herald* could be upgraded to be a useful, low-cost self-guide tour guide through the park. The newspaper could follow the general outline of the park interpretation, but also feature additional stories, references, questions, maps, and more information. Perhaps local businesses could help sponsor publication of the newspaper.

Oral histories: MFWP could produce and make available an audio "living history" program for the Headwaters, featuring oral histories and storytelling about each area of the park. Families driving through the park could play the tape, stop at the various spots and listen to stories. Such a tape could be produced with the cooperation and help of the Headwaters Chapter, the Bicentennial Commission, and the Montana Historical Society.

The Spectral Park Trailer: It was suggested during discussion that Headwaters is actually two parks: a virtual or conceptual park, and the real, physical park. One has to go through the first to get to the second. A temporary structure (i.e., trailer) could be installed at the entrance to the park, wherein visitors could view a film that introduces them to the Origins/Movement/Interactions concepts, and be plunged into the layers of meaning at Headwaters — place of beginning, place of cultural interactions of all kinds, place of continual exploration — before stepping out into the landscape.

A temporary building could also be manned by interpretive guides, could provide literature, books, tapes and other media. In addition to a film, the trailer could also house a series of computers with web access, where students, kids or history buffs could explore web sites with more information. The trailer or temporary building then would be removed after the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial years are past and visitorship returns to normal levels.

Notes & Comments

1. Tell the whole story at the entrance. Weave together everything here, both to provide foundation for the rest of the interpretation, and also to give an overarching story to those who don't read any further.
2. "Origins" — origins of rivers, tie in Native American origin stories. Corp of Discovery member striding the Missouri River. Emergence place. Yellowstone is where the buffalo came from. The umbilical from the center of the earth where life came from (see Shoshone, Bannock and Lakota legends) River as umbilicus. Even the Europeans who came here had to follow the river to its source.
3. Willow Creek is the place of 1st quadrant for state platt.
4. Headwaters receives and gives (water, resources, people)
5. Flow of time = flow of water. Helps connect people to the place. Helps visitors connect to where they are.
6. Three Forks was part of Old North Trail
7. This place influences human action. Natives, trappers, Lewis & Clark, settlers, tourists, varieties of cultures, families and individuals.

8. Part of the original "muck and goo" flowed just south of here — These rivers came from that area.
9. "Compass rose" concept — that this story is not just important to Americans, but to all North American humanity. It is larger than nations, larger than boundaries.
10. Chert mine is on private property, not visible from within the park. But chert nodules polished by cattle rubbing up against them can be seen, glinting in the distance.
11. What's the last significant event that happened at MHSP? — the Interstate 90 supplanted the Missouri River. 1954, the Eisenhower Administration...Interstate Highway Act. (Contemporary acts still influencing this place.) Leave time span open-ended, implying to the visitor that they themselves are a part of the flow of people and time through the Headwaters. **Be sure to include a timeline.**
12. Write the interpretation with a broad, dynamic feel to it, rather than a static, informative style. The interpretation anchors down into this broader story. Look from different perspectives; stories often have variants, or more sides to them than are usually told. Capture visitors' imaginations in entertaining, significant glimpses of meaning. Provoke people to think about other things besides Headwaters.

The trail system

A simple, mowed trail system takes off from a pullout near the park entrance, and also takes off from the camping area across the road. These trails intentionally are left natural and are not really maintained other than mowing. Where do they lead? What will a person see? Will the trail circle back, or dead-end somewhere, and will it be an interesting place to end up?

The trails allow visitors a quiet walk off the roadway. Interpretation along the trails should be minimal, perhaps placed only at the trailheads and at the end. Text and graphics should provoke readers to contemplate the major Headwaters themes,and how they participate in those themes, as they walk.

Several participants suggested connecting the trails together so that visitors could access most or all of the areas of the park without driving. Keeping in mind the hazards of crossing the roadway on foot, or the feasibility of constructing a walking culvert beneath the roadway, the trails should be connected to one another, and the interpretation to the main themes of the park, as much as possible.

Fort Rock

Fort Rock provides the only elevation for any kind of overlook of the area. Until and unless Lewis's Rock is made available to the park, Fort Rock remains the only way to gain perspective on the park and the confluence.

Fort Rock, south side, may be the place to introduce the natural history of the Headwaters area, geological formations and wildlife, the early Native American history (and pre-history)

Stories at Fort Rock	Introduce info & themes	Origins	Movements	Interactions
Early known human history of the area (indigenous nations)	*	*	*	
Original names for those places		*		*
Native plants, birds and animals		*	*	*
Geological formations, wildlife			*	
Explain why the area is called Fort Rock		*		*
We stand in L&C and others' footsteps here				*
Identify Lewis's Rock, Gallatin City, Ferry, etc.	*			
How this place was viewed by many nations				*

Notes & comments:

Maps of Three Forks area dating back to 1753, could help flesh out story. First real documentation and mapping was done in the early 1750s, when the French came into Three Forks; Spanish came soon after. What world did they see? What world did they not see?

Interpretive Plaza

The Interpretive Plaza should focus on the convergence of worlds — natural, cultural and political — that brought significant changes to the indigenous nations who used this area. These converging forces brought about the Louisiana Purchase, instigated the increase of exploration of the West by several countries, eventually spawned the Lewis and Clark expedition, and changed forever how this place was used.

But within those large-scale stories are small, personal stories as well: the story of Sacagawea, and of the settler children buried here in their tiny graves, legendary stories like Colter's run, and Native American oral histories.

Stories at the Interpretive Plaza	Introduce info & themes	Origins	Movements	Interactions
Dedicate 1/2 to history; 1/2 to landscape/geology		*	*	*
Geology: longest river, dinosaur eggs found just north of here		*	*	
Prehistoric people and chert mining		*		*
Major battles				*
Identify the Tribes and nations active here		*	*	
Discovery that poor navigability of the three streams made the traverse of the continent by water impossible. Great consequences in the political/economic history.			*	*
Other L&C info, from both directions of their expedition			*	*
Send people upriver to where Sacagawea was captured, Drouillard and Potts killed, Colter turned out by the Blackfeet			*	
Fur trade activities in the area			*	*
Old North Trail — river — ferries on Jefferson & Missouri — railroad — highway			*	
What happened here between L&C and 1900?			*	*
Homesteading & children's graves			*	*
Gallatin City			*	
Mention Clark Mauldlin who generously donated the land to the state for HSP	*			

Methods of interpretation

At Fort Rock and the Interpretive Plaza, guided tours, re-enactments (particularly at the Rendezvous area on the east side of Fort Rock, between the slope and the river) and live talks under the sod roof will help enhance the interpretive signs. It has been suggested that some temporary risers be brought in to the Rendezvous area during the Bicentennial seasons to accommodate large audiences for re-enactments or living history programs. This option would have to be explored with respect to the Primitive Parks limitations.

On top of Fort Rock, the orientation posts will be updated and replaced with signs more graphically expressive and built more low to the ground, of materials that blend with the natural landscape and reflect the spirit of the place.

Signs at the Interpretive Plaza will be replaced with updated text and graphics that express the park's interpretive themes and stories. The signs should be placed in such a way as to tell a cohesive story on their own, and also allow room for groups to gather for live programs under the sod roof. The Interpretive Plaza is an attractive, well-built structure, but its placement above and slightly away from the parking and picnic area, and prefaced by a rather impressive toilet area, will require that the landscaping and treatment

of the area leading to the Interpretive Plaza be designed to draw people up the pathway so they don't miss what is there.

The lone informational sign at the picnic area will be redesigned to better fit with the natural landscape, and to be more cohesive with the rest of the interpretive signs. If self-guided tour brochures are provided at the entrance, copies could also be made available here.

Notes & comments:

The plaza area is the only covered area where visitors can find shade on a hot day. At least one person suggested that more seating be available at the plaza.

The covered area might be reconfigured to accommodate storytellers and living history presentations.

Boat launch area

Interpretation at the boat launch area could focus on the river itself — as a main artery of the continent, as a major nutrient of the Great Northern Plains, as a significant transportation corridor for people over time, and as a metaphor for the progress of time and life through the landscape. The interpretation here should make visitors — even canoers just here to launch their craft — think a little more deeply about where they are, in the larger scale of things.

Stories at the Boat Launch	Introduce info & themes	Origins	Movements	Interactions
Boat launch back toward campground is the direction L&C approached headwaters	*		*	
Entries from Lewis and Clark journals (ref. to Lewis's Rock, etc.)			*	*
Two different L&C visits: 1805 and 1806, when Clark & Ordway split on the return trip			*	
Emphasize Missouri River significance.		*	*	
Emphasize significance of beaver in the area				
Chert mine and early Indians	*			*
River ecosystem	*		*	*
Natural history and fish species described by L&C		*		*
Flora & fauna. What besides fish did L&C see here? (Sandhill crane...)		*		*
A sign noting you are leaving the park	*			
New fish ID signs	*			

Methods of interpretation:

The boat ramp serves visitors coming to Headwaters for purely recreational purposes as well as those who come for educational reasons. Here, a few simple, sturdy

and attractive signs should give visitors needed information about river access, as well as pointing them towards the natural splendor of the river ecosystem, including the fish, bird and plant life. Text might include quotes from literature written about the river life here (recommendations are provided). Since the chert mine was located near here (but not visible from the boat launch) it should be mentioned. Together these naturally occurring phenomena help enrich the fisher's or boater's experience of this unique place

Notes & comments:
This would be a good place to include quotes from literature about the Missouri: John G. Niehart, Dayton Duncan, Stanley Vestel.

Headwaters viewpoint

The Headwaters viewpoint, now a bit of a letdown as far as a goal or destination, could be greatly improved to help visitors feel "this is the place." The quiet beauty of this spot should be protected, but a series of low-profile signs, constructed of natural materials, could draw visitors from their cars in the parking lot down the short trail to view the joining of the Jefferson and the Madison.

The confluence might be a good place for a simple map showing the overlays of meaning here: current landscape, Lewis & Clark's paths of progress & regress, boundaries and places defined by the various nations who have been here, etc.

Existing interpretive sign at the Confluence

Stories at the Confluence Area	Introduce info & themes	Origins	Movements	Interactions
""We see it as they saw It" – a must-visit area for L&C folk — yet river landscapes are changing all the time	*		*	
Difficulties, uncertainties, challenges the L&C Expedition faced here			*	*
Purely natural viewscape from here. Draw visitors to immerse themselves in another time and way of being.		*	*	*
Two rivers come together			*	
Trapping era			*	*
Flow of time			*	
Site of 3-day camp upriver	*			*
Capture of Sacagawea				*
Hydrology		*	*	*

Methods of interpretation:

The Headwaters viewpoint is the focal point of the park, and is also one of its most fragile areas. Interpretation here must be designed to protect the riverbank area, to minimize impact from visitors, but also to give a much deeper, more meaningful experience of the Confluence themes than is now provided. The parking area should be landscaped to be more attractive, to draw visitors down a nicely graveled path toward the river to view the confluence. Interpretive signs here will be attractive, low to the ground and made of natural materials as much as possible, and will draw people into the experience of the place.

Living history programs, re-enactments or live talks should be kept to small groups of people, to minimize impact on the riverbank and the vegetation in this area. One idea would be to offer guided canoe trips from the campground area, or from Ling Rock, down to the conjoning of the Madison and the Jefferson. A historical marker — perhaps a tree, or a carved pole made from local cottonwood — placed along the shoreline right near the confluence and visible from the Headwaters viewpoint would mark the geographic importance of the headwaters.

Notes & comments:

1. It was suggested that there be some symbolic visual commemoration of the spot. Something that codifies the meaning of the Headwaters. It may commemorate Lewis & Clark, but would lift them up into the higher context, symbolizing all those who make their way to the place of origin — and keep going.
2. An aerial photo of the headwaters could make the geography of it make sense, since many visitors expect all three rivers to pour together in one spot.

Ling Rock

Ling Rock is a small, unobtrusive corner of the park that contains one interpretive sign referring to a ghost-development visible across the river. Workbook respondents asked for minimal landscaping, and suggested removing the current interpretive sign, and putting a new one the parking area that would inform visitors about Ling Rock, and draw them to walk up there. One suggestion: Simple, creative landscaping could turn Ling Rock into a quiet nature, fishing or meditation area.

Stories at Ling Rock	Introduce info & themes	Origins	Movements	Interactions
Developments and influences since Lewis and Clark	*		*	*
Focus on times gone by; nd what can be seen across the river;	*	*	*	
The ferry business			*	
Ling Rock's name -- ling -- the fish		*		
1st Gallatin City, first county seat, Pioneer era			*	
Should be able to find out what is there from the parking lot	*			

Methods of interpretation

Ling Rock presents an opportunity for solitude and reflection. The interpretive sign at Ling Rock will be removed and another erected at the parking area nearby to inform and intrigue visitors about what they will see if they walk to the river here. The site of Ling Rock itself will be cleaned up and reclaimed with landscaping as much as practicable.

Ling Rock is a good place for live talks or living histories before small groups. Its isolated locale and the cleared area beside the rock create a natural venue for special programs. One suggestion is a living history program with two or three members of the Lewis and Clark expedition canoeing downriver to Ling Rock, and preparing a meal while talking over details of the expedition. Another idea is to anchor a small raft in the river to use as a stage or platform from which live talks or history programs can be given.

Camping area

The campground presents a few opportunities for interpretation. Current signs refer to the little white log cabin, and to a mill that once operated nearby. One suggestion: the little white cabin could be used for programs, or as an interpretive structure itself.

Stories at the Campground Area	Introduce info & themes	Origins	Movements	Interactions
Interpretation wraps up the "confluence" story; also functions as a stand-alone piece for those who visit only the campground	*	*	*	*
How white cabin was built, and why. How does it relate to MT history?			*	*
Promote the town of Three Forks	*			
Gallatin City			*	
What will I see on the walking trails? Where do they lead me? (This is critical information for navigating through the park.)	*		*	
Campers' information board	*			

Methods of interpretation:

Interpretation at the camping area should emphasize fireside talks and informational programs. The little white cabin could be adapted to accommodate a revolving video or slide show to be shown just after dark each evening. The little white cabin, staffed by volunteers, could serve as a mini visitor center during seasons of peak activity, and here brochures, maps and tapes could be distributed to visitors.

Tipis could be erected in the cleared area beside the camp ground, and would provide a shady spot for live talks, oral histories, music, dancing and demonstrations by people of different nations whose history celebrates the Headwaters area. Live programs here would make the campground more worthwhile to mosquito-bothered campers who otherwise would be tempted to pull up their tent stakes and head for a motel.

Throughout the park, interpretive signs will be updated and improved to focus on the stories and themes identified above. Their physical layout and design will be natural, attractive and low-to the ground as much as practicable, except in the Interpretive Plaza. The interpretive text will be cohesive and intriguing enough so that visitors who partake in no other interpretive services besides reading the signs can get a full, thoughtful experience of the Headwaters. The signs themselves will be written and designed as a long-lasting legacy celebrating the heritage and significance of the Headwaters of the Missouri.

During the peak Bicentennial seasons, the park's interpretive activities will emphasize live programs, living histories and re-enactments as much as possible. Areas will be cleared, or utilized for crowds and audiences, in such a way that they can be returned to their natural state after the peak years are over. MFWP will forge partnership relationships with local institutions and organizations to provide live interpretive services from a variety of viewpoints and traditions and covering a breadth of topics.

The interpretive services and programs will remain focused in certain areas (entrance, Interpretive Plaza, camping area) so that it will always be possible for the visitor seeking solitude, restorative recreation or contemplation to find space, quiet and peace at the park.

Notes & comments

1. A tipi (or several) might be erected at the campground area where interpreters from the different Headwaters nations can give programs, relate histories, answer questions

Other suggested story ideas for the park

Petroglyph on exposed rock near Interpretive Plaza
The English Remittance Colony
History of Trident & Cement plant
James Shedd's bridges
Father Pierre DeSmet's visit to the Three Forks

General suggestions from the Focus Group:

• Plan to keep the majority of the traffic on the pavement footprint as much as possible, to protect the unpaved areas.

• Erect signs in Three Forks, and provide shuttle buses to the park that feature interpretive programs along the way, so by the time people get to the park they already know what a powerful and special place it is, and also they know how to use the park. This way Three Forks provides most of the services and facilities; impact on the park itself could be minimized.

> "The Interpretive Plan should be phase-able, for scale-up and scale-down for the Bicentennial bubble or as needed, but with built-in systems for scaling back again as visitorship declines."

> "At Harper's Ferry, only the locals know where public access is to the park. The rest take shuttle buses." (This is difficult to enforce because of the camping area, and because the park is on a public-access state highway.)

> "Use the design features, and the physical limitations of the park, as crowd control tools."

• Fly flags of the Headwaters "nations" at the entrance

• Set up tipis at the far end of the park, where cultural presentations can be given by a multitude of groups.

• During the busiest months of the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial, provide living history programs at each area of the park, using interpretive guides who are dressed in period dress, and who give visitors an "authentic" glimpse of life at Headwaters in a previous time. Have Lewis & Clark paddle downstream around Ling Rock at sunset. Serve people a simple supper. Let them ask questions. Use different characters on different evenings (Toussant, York, etc.)

VIII. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This Interpretive Plan will be incorporated into the Master Site Plan for Headwaters State Park. Implementation of this Plan will begin in February 2001, after review by the advisors, park managers and others involved in the process of its creation. Please note that, even where not stipulated specifically, these steps will be taken under the guidance and suggestions of the advisory panel, and with input from Tribal offices.

Timeline

A tentative timeline for implementation of this plan is as follows:

January 2001	Final review of Implementation Plan
February 1-15	FWP draft Request for Proposals
February 15	FWP issues Request for Proposals
March 10	Proposals due to FWP
March 10-20	Review of proposals by FWP
March 21	Successful bidder identified and contract prepared
March 25	Initial project meeting: FWP, Contractor, advisory group
April 20	Phase I of contract submitted: Complete outline of interpretive text, panel design, placement and landscaping design
May 15	Second meeting with advisory panel
June 20	Partnerships identified with individuals and groups to do live talks and other interpretive programs, and an outline of those programs established (to be updated as project progresses)
July 10	Phase II of contract submitted: Draft of interpretive text, graphic images identified and either located or created, final panel layout, and a draft list of suggested live talks and interp. programs for the 2002 season.
July 20	Third meeting with advisory panel, followed by last changes to interpretive signs. Begin final layout of signs.
August 15	Interp signs go to production.
October 1	New interpretive signs installed at HSP
November 1	Draft of self-guide brochure text finished. People contacted to sign up for interp programs and live talks. Contract signed for MHSP web site production.

December 15 Final text for self-guide brochure finished. Web site design submitted for approval. Fourth meeting with advisory panel

January 30, 2002 Self-guide brochure goes to printer. Schedule of live talks for 2002 season finalized; contracts signed.

The path ahead